

# Iowa Current Developments

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Rm. 693, Des Moines, IA 50309

Fall 2006

## From the Office of Iowa State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren



### What's inside....

Townley Back from Iraq.....	Page 2
Area One gest new Asst. State Conservationist (FO).....	Page 2
Employee Awarded "Rose".....	Page 4
ISU Recognizes Agronomist...	Page 5
Conservation Messages for Bikers.....	Page 5
Personnel Actions.....	Page 6
Louisiana State Conservationist Recognizes Iowans.....	Page 6

"Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service: Excellence in helping people conserve and improve our natural resources, communities and environment."

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**W**e knew a year ago that 2006 would be a very challenging year for our conservation work and our agency. We planned for budget cuts in FY06 and the final budget ended up about the same as FY05. Conservation work continued and, thanks to each Iowa NRCS employee and partner, much progress was made and we had a tremendous year.

Some of our 2006 accomplishments include:

- \$20 million invested in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- We led the nation in Wetlands Reserve Program contracts
- We added 133 new Conservation Security Program contracts in 2006
- We were responsible for 9 percent of the nation's Conservation Reserve Program work

Iowa has consistently been a national leader in so many ways over the years. This will continue as will challenges and change.

Right now we are operating under a FY07 continuing budget resolution. We will operate that way until Congress passes a new budget, which I expect shortly after the mid-term election. I predict this new budget will be tight and that we will see 5 percent funding reductions in Conservation Technical Assistance and Resource Conservation and Development. Our plan is to spend conservatively, filling only critical staffing positions, and incurring only those expenses essential to agency operations.

We have a plan to protect our people and to continue our conservation work. It's a good plan and we will stick with it unless circumstances force a change. If that happens I will tell you about it.

We've gone through this before and we've come out okay. I believe we be all right this year, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Van Klaveren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

### Townley Back from Iraq

Poweshiek County District Conservationist Greg Townley is back from one year of active duty with the Army Reserve in Iraq. On his return he had this to say to his conservation family in Iowa:

"It is good to be back home from Iraq. My active duty was from July 16, 2005, to October 5, 2006. I am glad that I went, but am certainly happy to be finished with the tour of duty.

"My job in Iraq was to serve as a liaison officer from the Army's 3rd Corps Support Command (COSCOM) to the Marine Logistics Group at Al Taqqadum, which is located between Fallujah and Ramadi. The 3rd COSCOM was responsible for providing logistical support to all units in Iraq.

"I was able to see a lot of progress during the time I was in Iraq in terms of education and building of the Iraqi Army. As the year progressed, I saw more Iraqi Army units working beside US troops. The Iraqi Army is still learning how to provide logistics and

take care of their troops, but we do see improvements as time goes by.

"My duty was good, but I really missed my family and am thankful for the support that they received from friends and family while I was gone.

"I want to thank our NRCS family for their great support. The work day that you all completed at our house and farm really meant a lot to my wife and to me.

### Introducing Area One's New Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations)

Sheila Cox became the new Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for Area One October 16.

She replaces Astor Boozer, who is now NRCS' national program manager for the Conservation Reserve Program.

Cox was raised on a small farm near Salix in northwestern Iowa and graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in professional agriculture. Her USDA career started in late 1977 when she started working for ASCS (FSA) as a program assistant. In 1987 she became a soil conservation technician in Woodbury County with SCS and then became a soil conservationist in Woodbury and Plymouth counties. In 1999 the Cox family moved to Hawaii, where Sheila served as a soil/resource conservationist for the islands of Molokai and Lanai.

For the last four years she has been district conservationist for the island of Oahu, along with a number of acting positions in both Hawaii and California.

I also received several care packages and phone cards from my friends at NRCS.

"Everyone has been very supportive in emails and letters, and in allowing me to take some extra time to get caught up on work at home before returning to work at NRCS. I also appreciate my co-workers who have stepped in to cover my work while I was gone. It is great to be part of Iowa NRCS. Thanks for all you do."

Sheila and her husband, John, have been married 23 years and have one daughter, Kelli, who is a college student in Hawaii.



**Sheila Cox is Area One's new Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations).**

Cox says, "My time in Hawaii has been both challenging and rewarding. I will miss the weather, the ocean, the people and their rich cultures, and my

Hawaii ohana\*. But it is time for this Iowa farm girl to return to her roots and rejoin my Iowa and NRCS family and friends. I am very excited to be back and I look forward to continuing the tradition of excellent conservation work done in Iowa."

Area one is made up of 19 counties in northwestern Iowa.

*\*Part of Hawaiian culture, ohana means family in an extended sense of the term. It emphasizes that family and friends are bound together and members must cooperate and remember one another.*



**Janet and Greg Townley celebrate Greg's return after a year on active duty in Iraq. Townley is District Conservationist in Poweshiek County.**



### Tent Raised for Conservation

Conservationists from ten agencies and organizations answered conservation questions from many of the tens of thousands of farmers and landowners that attended the Farm Progress Show in Amana August 28-30.

Headquartered in a 60 by 90 foot tent dubbed Conservation Central, participants had displays, exhibits, and games aimed at promoting conservation practices and programs. It offered landowners a one-stop place to get their questions answered.

The NRCS, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil and Water Conservation, the Soil and Water Conservation Society and Conservation Districts of Iowa were among those that participated.

Usually held in Iowa on even numbered years, the Farm Progress Show is billed as the nation's largest outdoor farm show event. It draws attendees from all over the world.

One of the most popular Conservation Central exhibits was the Iowa Department of Natural Resource's Stream Bank Erosion Table. The table—actually a trailer with a waterpump and a shapable sand terrain—demonstrates how running water (streams and rivers) can erode and change the landscape.

Larry Jones, Tama County District Conservationist, was an NRCS volunteer. He was happy with Conservation Central's impact. Jones said, "At the show we were able to talk with many people about the importance of conservation practices and programs to meet resource needs."



Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Society members staff a stream table to demonstrate the effects of water movement to visitors of the Farm Progress Show held in August in Amana. Watching water movement with a young member of 4-H are Elaine Ilvess, Program

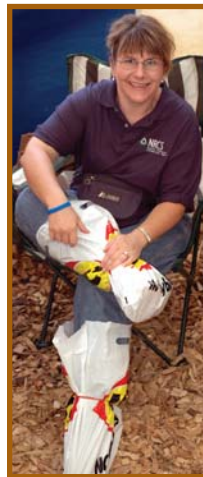
Planner with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil Conservation; Kevin Kuhn, Adair County District Conservationist; Tom Oswald, Soil Conservationist; and Lori Harris, Jackson County District Conservationist.

### New Boots

Julie Watkins Mitchell uses plastic bags to protect her feet from the ankle deep mud at the 2006 Farm Progress Show. Heavy rains and show traffic combined to make outdoor walking very difficult.

Watkins Mitchell, a Tama County soil conservation technician, said the plastic boots helped keep her feet dry.

She was one of many NRCS volunteers that promoted conservation practices to show-goers.



Julie Watkins Mitchell puts on "mud boots."

### Iowa SCS Educates Members

Fifty people took advantage of educational opportunities at the annual Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) conference held in September at the Neil Smith Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City. Presentations were made on Iowa's Water Quality, Global Warming, and Water Quality from a Fisheries Perspective. The presentations were followed by tours of the refuge, Camp Creek stream habitat work at Thomas Mitchell Park, and an evening meal.

Future SWCS educational opportunities will be listed on their website: [www.iaswcs.org](http://www.iaswcs.org).

### District Employee Given Des Moines Register Rose"

James Martin, Clear Creek Watershed Coordinator for Johnson County, received a "Rose" from The Des Moines Register Editorial Board October 8 for work he and friend Brian Emerson did to raise awareness of the importance of clean water. This positive recognition was given to Martin and Emerson for canoeing the 300-mile length of the Cedar River and videotaping the best and worst of what they saw.



**Canoeing conservationist James Martin,**

In late September, the pair took the two-week trip to videotape the river and to identify buffer and filter strip opportunities for future conservation work.

Martin says the potential buffer and filter strip locations will be given to each of the 11 soil and water conservation districts they canoed through. The districts will then be able to contact each landowner about making conservation improvements to their land.

The video they took will be edited into a dozen different programs, 11 short videos and one long one. The short videos will be county specific and show what the Cedar River looks like in each county. The long video will show how the river has affected people's lives and Martin believes it will be suitable for play on Iowa Public Television.

The men have known each other since elementary school. Martin has been a district employee for five years and Emerson is a professional gardener with the University of Wisconsin Extension Service.

### Student Job Shadowing

Terry Guikema, a sophomore at Luther College in Decorah, recently spent a day in the Geographic Information Systems section of the State Office. Guikema's aunt, Ruth Holan, a state technician, and District Conservationist Kevin Kuhn in the Greenfield Field Office arranged a day so she could learn more about NRCS and GIS.

A former district employee, Guikema is interested in a career with NRCS.



**College student Terry Guikema watches Jim Phillips make a map during a recent shadowing day she spent with the State Office GIS staff.**

### New Brochures

This fall look for these new brochure titles arriving at field offices:

**Prescribed Burning** provides background information on how to plan and implement a prescribed burn. It includes a sample burn plan.

**Stream Solutions** provides information for landowners on low-cost, environmentally beneficial alternatives to costly channel straightening. **Faces of CSP** describes the program and highlights six farmers' experiences with the Conservation Security Program.

**A Guide to Conservation Programs** is a quick reference to financial and technical assistance on private lands.

These new publications will also be available for web download. To see electronic versions of Iowa NRCS publications, go to [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov) and click on the "Publications" link. To search for national publications, click on the 888-LANDCARE link.



**Gathering items to send to poor children in Central America are Chickasaw County Service Center Program Technicians Linda Zubrod and Leon Kolbet, Farm Loan Manager Julie Offerman, Program Technician Lisa Leyh, Conservation**

**Specialist Lisa Bahe, Soil Conservation Technician Beth Rachut, State Secretary Lillie Hines, and Program Technicians Lois Shattuck and Carol Boos. The boxes will be given to Nicaraguan school children.**



### State Agronomist Gets Extension Award

State Agronomist Barbara Stewart was honored at a dinner in September with a "2006 Friends of Extension State Award" for her contributions to Iowa State University's Extension programming. The award



Barbara Stewart, State Agronomist, receives a "2006 Friends of Extension State Award" from Iowa State University Vice-President for Extension, Dr. Jack Payne.

was given to recognize Stewart's 29 years of involvement in a number of areas of extension work, including agriculture and natural resources, 4-H, and youth programming.

Currently she serves on the Jasper County Extension Council and provides conservation leadership to county 4-H members.

### Do You Remember....

Joyce Swartzendruber? She earned a degree from Iowa State in 1984 and worked in Area 5 before she was Nevada district conservationist from 1987 to 1991. Now Swartzendruber is the State Conservationist in Maine.



Joyce Swartzendruber

### Team Shares Conservation Message with Bikers

A group of Iowa conservation partners provided some much-needed relief to riders during this year's hot, humid, hilly RAGBRAI. The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa was held July 23-29, and the Iowa Conservation Team handed out free bananas and water to riders passing by their tent.

Jason Johnson, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, said, "Several thousand bicyclists participate in RAGBRAI each summer, so it's a good opportunity to help the public learn more about soil and water conservation."

The team provided conservation-themed postcards at no charge and educated the diverse RAGBRAI audience on what farmers do to conserve Iowa's resources.

New York cyclist Bethia Waterman told the team, "As a rider and conservationist, I just want to tell you that you did a great job! The water, the postcards and bananas were all much-appreciated. It really helped to have someone interpret the geological history of the landscape we were traversing."

The team set up their site each day in a rural area where riders might need to stop for a break, usually on a farmer's front yard.

During the week-long ride, the Conservation Team handed out more than 3,000 pounds of bananas, and sent 4,300 postcards worldwide.

This is the fourth year the Iowa Chapter of Soil and Water Conservation Society, NRCS, the Iowa Department of Land Stewardship's Soil Conservation Division, and local soil conservation districts partnered to form the Iowa Conservation Team

### New Easement Programs Coordinator Named

Monica Monk is the new Easement Programs Coordinator for Iowa. An Iowa native, Monk spent the last eight years with the US Fish and Wildlife service on habitat restoration work in Texas' Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuge. Considered a top priority acquisition area by the Fish and Wildlife service, Monk managed a nursery, easement contracts and restoration work on this wildlife-rich site that is growing to 132,500 acres in size.

Monk is married with three girls aged 5, 4 and 2. They will live in Polk City where Monk wants to continue her hobbies of gardening and designing native landscapes that attract butterflies.

As Easement Programs Coordinator, Monk will manage the Wetlands Reserve Program and its 1,100 contracts that deal with nearly 140,000 acres in Iowa.



New Easement Program Coordinator Monica Monk



Poweshiek County Soil and Water Conservation District personnel Mark Kennett, Carol Brown, Tina Cibula, James Jesina and Craig Hempy set up a tent to provide water, bananas and conservation messages to RAGBRAI 2006 participants.

# Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Personnel Action	Eff Date	Dept
Hathcock,Ronda L	Civil Engr	09	Promotion	6/25/06	Area 2 AO Fort Dodge
Moran,Tim K	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	6/25/06	Area 1 FO Spirit Lake
Seidel Jr,Martin E	Soil Conservst	11	Retirement	7/2/06	Area 4 FO Atlantic
Champa,Thomas M	Soil Conservst	12	Promotion	7/9/06	Area 2 AO Fort Dodge
McMichael,Julie M	Soil Conservst	09	Reassignment	7/23/06	Area 4 SSO Atlantic
Paulin,John T	Landscp Arch	12	Promotion	7/23/06	Natural Resource Plng Staff,
Shelman,Meleia R	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Reassignment	7/23/06	Area 5 FO Malcom
Cosby,Hal	Soil Conservst	13	Retirement	8/3/06	Ames
Chafa,Christine M	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	8/6/06	Area 1 FO Storm Lake
Foreman,Laurel	Hydrlgst	12	Promotion	8/6/06	Technical Services Staff
Chafa,Christine M	Soil Conservst	09	Reassignment	8/20/06	Area 3 FO Independence
Jensen,Sindra A	Contr Specst	11	Promotion	8/20/06	Management Staff
Wiley,Phoebe M	Soil Conserv Techncn	04	Name Chg from Hoskins	8/20/06	Area 5 FO Washington
Williams,Nichole L	Soil Conservst	07	Name Chg from Webb	8/20/06	Area 1 FO Lemars
Zimmerman,Michelle D	Soil Conserv Techncn	06	Promotion	8/20/06	Area 1 FO Primghar
Link,Roger V	Soil Conservst	12	Retirement	9/1/06	Natural Resource Plng Staff
Lee,Thomas C	Purchsg Agt	08	Leave without Pay	9/2/06	Management Staff
Garrison,Mark V	Envrnmntl Engr	12	Promotion	9/3/06	Engineering Staff
Luz,Teresa A	Secy (OA)	06	Reassignment & Chg to PT	9/3/06	Management Staff
Mall,Jerome M	Civil Engr Tech	07	Reassignment	9/3/06	Area 5 AO Fairfield
Sass,Neil R	Soil Scntst	05	Career-Cond Appt	9/3/06	Area 3 SSO Waverly
Meyer,Jody E	Soil Conservst	09	Retirement	9/8/06	Area 3 FO Waukon
Focht,Andrew M	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	9/17/06	Area 4 FO Corning
Peitz,Eric R	Soil Conservst	05	Promotion	9/17/06	Area 5 FO Fairfield
Steffens,Teresa K	Off Asst	06	Reassignment	9/17/06	Area 3 AO West Union
Swanson,Linda S	Off Asst	06	Reassignment	9/17/06	Area 5 AO Fairfield
Wichman,Bonnie L	Off Asst	06	Reassignment	9/17/06	Area 1 AO Sioux City
Cangas-Marshall, Rita S	Secy	06	Retirement	9/30/06	Area 5 RC&D Burlington
Jensen,Donald J	Soil Conservst	07	Retirement	9/30/06	Area 3 FO Decorah
Lyman,Gloria J	Secy	05	Retirement	9/30/06	Area 4 RC&D Oakland



Louisiana State Conservationist Don Gohmert stands with Iowa State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren and Iowa NRCS staff members that spent a month detailed to Louisiana to repair hurricane damage. Gohmert was in Des Moines October 25 to present volunteers certificates of appreciation and to personally thank them for their service to his state. Participating in the ceremony were: Shaffer

Ridgeway, John Leichtman, Christina Murphy, Rick Van Klaveren, Theodore Oswald, Don Gohmert, Katundra Shears, Mark Garrison, James Wolfe, Steve Voltmer, Ronda Hathcock, and Gerald Muff. Gohmert said hurricane recovery work in Louisiana will continue well into next year and that they are still seeking additional volunteer help.